

Editor



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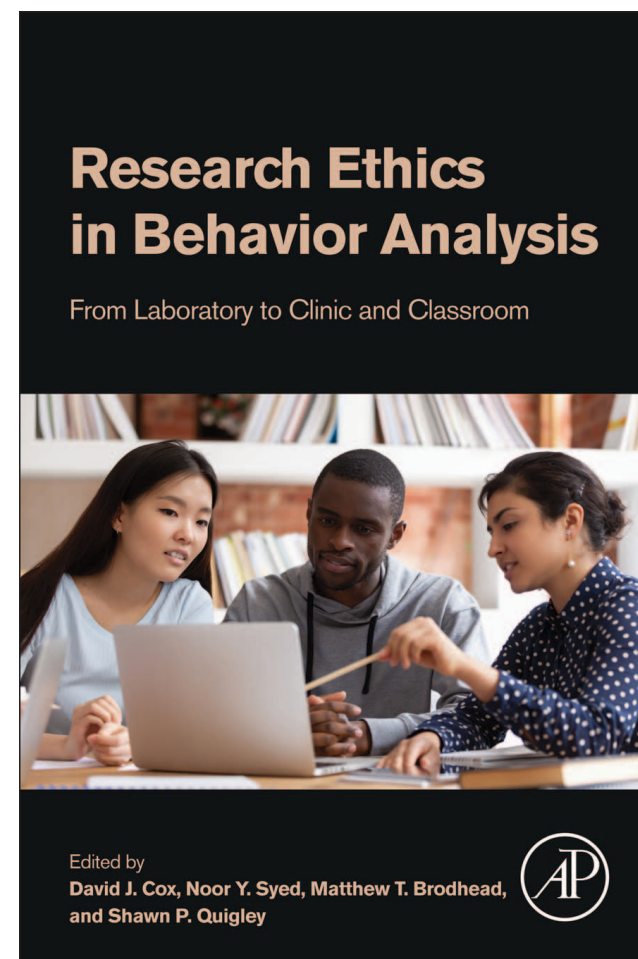
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Chapter 8

Conducting research in applied settings: Aligning research and applied goals

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Conducting research in applied settings: aligning research with applied goals

Behavior analysis is both a science and a professional practice with a shared foundation of theory and methodology. As a science, behavior analytic research focuses on the study of principles of learning though interactions between the environment and behavior. Research in behavior analysis exists on a continuum from basic to applied, with each domain leading to the evolution of the science and practice (Epling & Pierce, 1986). Behavior analytic research is categorized as basic or applied not by the location in which it is conducted (e.g., laboratory vs. applied setting) but rather by the way in which the specific variables under study are selected (Baer et al., 1968). In an oversimplification, basic research helps to answer questions derived from theories of learning through carefully selected variables while applied research is defined by the application (or extension) and analysis of the science to socially significant variables.

Applied research is the foundation of the field of applied behavior analysis (ABA). In the formative article “Some Current Dimensions of ABA,” Baer et al. (1968) set forth the defining features of ABA. Behavior Analysis maintains a conceptual system that is immediately important to the analysis, “The Behavior Analyst” (1959) extinction, reinforcement, and behavior (e.g., behavior).

Research Ethics in Behavior Analysis

From Laboratory to Clinic and Classroom

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An imprint of Elsevier

Science is the best but an imperfect approach to knowledge generation, and replication is a means of controlling for imperfected scientific methods. Unfortunately, the perceived value of replication appears to be diminished by reverence for novel and sensational findings. When these misplaced values occur in the context of publication bias, inaccurate research findings can accumulate.

As editors of a textbook centering around ethical research practices, we believe that higher quality research first comes by acknowledging biases within the research process, both covert and overt. The ability and opportunity to engage in research is a social privilege and carries many associated costs for actually conducting research and having the free time to write and publish papers. The behavior analytic field is composed primarily of practitioners, many of whom dedicate their careers towards improving the lives of others.